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ABSTRACT

This report is the fifth in a series describing the background, theory, and progress of the Differentiated Staffing Project in the Eugene, Oregon, School District. The report describes a number of instructional changes that occurred during the first year of the project. Several examples of new instructional patterns that emerged in the experimental schools are described as evidence that the project has contributed significantly to creating better learning environments for children. These changes were the results of planned organizational changes rather than planned parts of the project. (Author)

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PROGRESS REPORT NO. 5

TITLE:

"Instructional Change in the Unitized, Differentiated Staffing, Elementary School"

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FOCUS ON:

INSTRUCTION

January, 1972

PURPOSE

This report describes a number of instructional changes that occurred during the first year of the Differentiated Staffing Project in Eugene. Several examples of new instructional patterns that emerged in the DS Schools during the year are described. The most pleasing aspect of these changes is that they were not planned parts of the DS project but resulted from the organizational changes that were planned.

We think the examples of instructional change are clear evidence that the project has contributed significantly to creating better learning environments for children. The report includes a number of recommendations based on that evidence.

IN PERSPECTIVE

Traditionally, educators have attempted to implement too many new ideas and innovative practices at the same time. This practice has often led to more confusion of goals and roles among the staff members involved than to positive changes. Therefore, the decision was made early in the planning phase of the DS Project that a change in the organization and staffing pattern of a school would be sufficient innovation to introduce at one time. It was hoped that by concentrating primarily on the organizational pattern of the school the following goals would be realized:

1) greater involvement of teachers in the decision-making process;
2) increased emphasis on teaching teams, instead of individual teachers, for instruction; and
3) greater specialization of roles and responsibilities within the school.

It was further hoped that these goals, once achieved, would lead to increased teacher satisfaction and improved effectiveness with students. In addition, it was expected that improved colleague relationships would lead to improved instructional programs for students.

The DS Coordinators felt that educators have experienced a great deal of difficulty in trying to introduce and sustain innovative programs of instruction for two reasons. First, the self-contained classroom structure itself isolates teachers and hinders sharing of ideas and trying out joint efforts. Second, teachers usually lack the communicative skills to communicate their real thoughts and feelings about changes or feel that it is improper to do so. As a result, it has been difficult to begin new programs, or to ascertain the staff's real commitments or reservations about new programs. It has been difficult to maintain consistency and continuity of new programs once begun.

This difficulty is partially explained by observing that teacher education institutions are not making the effort to prepare teachers to cope with the problems and procedures of working with adults. Teacher education programs historically have been "child oriented" in scope, preparing teachers to work exclusively with children. This philosophy is obvious when one observes the lack of courses offered to teachers in team teaching, communication skills, group problem-solving, and instructional leadership. Thus, the new elementary teacher is immediately placed in a school with 10 to 30 other teachers and expected to create, plan, and conduct programs with others without any training in effective colleague relationships.

Therefore, this DS Project has been based on the assumption that by improving the organizational setting for positive colleague relationships, and by giving staffs time and methods to orient themselves to the new organization, they would be better prepared to develop the particular instructional program best suited to their schools and their students. Consequently, no major instructional program changes were purposely introduced along with the organizational changes in the DS Project.

PROCEDURES

The intent of Organizational Development Training (discussed in Report No. 2) was to increase group effectiveness by improving communication between teachers, group problem-solving techniques, and group decision-making procedures. After the initial OD training intervention with Parker and Spring Creek staffs, the DS Coordinators continued to emphasize the need for utilization of staff strengths, sharing of individual talents, and utilizing district resource persons. Teachers were encouraged to call on the help of the district's curriculum coordinators and all Curriculum Associates within their own school as they engaged in planning and development of instructional programs.

Initially, very little use of personnel outside the teaching Unit was evident. At the time (October, 1970) it was perceived by the DS Coordinators that teachers were spending considerable time adjusting to the new organization, to different colleague relationships, and to the opening of school. These three factors did not allow enough time for staffs to seriously consider the utilization of personnel outside their teaching Units. The DS Coordinators decided to stop putting

pressure on Units to call on outside assistance in curriculum and instruction planning. However, considerable assistance was provided by the DS Coordinators and CASEA* staff members in the areas of group problem-solving and interpersonal relations between Unit members.

It was thought that those Units that developed an ability to work together effectively would be more willing to eventually move away from the self-contained classroom arrangement and into new instructional patterns. This proved to be true as the year progressed.

During the first six months of the project, it was very difficult for the DS Coordinators to communicate the main purpose of the project to staff members in the project schools. The staffs had to be reminded again and again that the intent was not to dissolve the self-contained classroom nor to create subject-matter specialists out of teachers, but to provide them with the skills to develop with other colleagues a program utilizing the strengths of both the self-contained classroom and team teaching. It is perceived at this time by the DS Coordinators that many persons in the district are still convinced that the purpose of the DS Project is to abolish the self-contained classroom. The reactions of many of those persons, as expressed to some staff members in the project schools, may have contributed to the difficulty that project staffs had in clearly understanding the project's main purpose.

* Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration at the University of Oregon. The Organizational Development training program was developed by CASEA, and initial training workshops for DS schools were conducted by CASEA staff.

Still another reason that may have contributed to the reluctance on the part of many teachers to abandon the self-contained classroom was their lack of knowledge about alternative directions to move, and how far they were allowed to go. The Principals and Curriculum Associates were encouraged to seek out alternative methods of organizing for instruction. The DS Coordinators introduced the ideas of open concept schools, of the English free-school programs, and of learning centers as possible alternatives. Not until the last two or three months of the first year were some teachers beginning to talk seriously about planning ways to incorporate some of these ideas into their program.

Even under the umbrella of experimentation, many teachers expressed to the DS Coordinators their fear of taking great risks with curriculum and instructional programs. These staff members cited the potential resistance to major instructional change from parents, central administration, district curriculum coordinators and specialists as the major reason for not desiring to take those risks. Still, many examples of change in programs for students are evident after the first year of the project. These examples will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The following six conclusions were presented in a doctoral dissertation by one of the DS Coordinators.* The information was gathered through classroom and Unit meeting observations and through interviews with groups of teachers. The experimental schools referred to in the conclusions are Parker and Spring Creek. The control schools mentioned are also Eugene schools. By prior agreement with those staffs, the schools are not identified.

1) The experimental schools showed an increase in the number of opportunities for students to be involved in determining their own educational program. Each of the teaching Units provided at least one block of time during the year for some type of student-interest groups, mini courses that permitted student selection, or learning centers that allowed for individual exploration of interests. Each of the activities were provided during the regular school day. One of the two control schools also offered student-interest activities for all students in the school. However, the activities were offered after the regular school day had ended. The other control school indicated no opportunities for student-selected activities.

* Essig, Don M. The Effects of a Multi-Unit, Differentiated Staffing Organization Upon Teachers' Attitudes and Instructional Programs. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Oregon, September, 1971.

2) Collaborative teaching arrangements between personnel from the different teaching teams became a regular feature of the two experimental schools. The Curriculum Associates, classroom teachers, and teaching assistants were often scheduled with students in teams and classrooms other than their own. Personnel in the control schools, however, with the exception of a few isolated instances, worked primarily with the class of students that were assigned to them.

3) Involvement of ancillary personnel with students on an instructional basis increased in both experimental schools. Both principals were scheduled on a regular basis with classes. The counselors in each experimental school increased their activities with students in regular classroom settings, providing more classroom discussions and group counseling activities. The paraprofessional worked directly with students nearly all of their working day. The principals in the control schools did not teach on any regular basis, nor did the activities of the other auxiliary personnel (resource teacher, counselor, teacher aides) change to any great extent.

4) Both experimental schools showed success at reducing the adult/student ratio for the majority of instructional activites. This was accomplished primarily through the collaborative teaching arrangements discussed in an earlier finding and through the use of

auxiliary personnel in the school. Extensive planning and scheduling of all personnel in each of the experimental schools permitted teachers to work with groups of 10-15 students for numerous instructional activities. Both control schools showed that nearly all instruction was received by students from their regular classroom teacher within their assigned classroom.

5) Two of the teaching teams in experimental school B demonstrated efforts to eliminate the traditional lock-step ability grouping for mathematics instruction, whereby students were originally placed in a group based on their math ability and then remained in that same group throughout the year. In both teaching teams (Units II and III) emphasis was placed on short-term, flexible, skill grouping programs. Students were evaluated prior to each separate math unit to determine placement for instruction in that particular unit.* One of the control schools incorporated the traditional ability grouping practices for some reading and math instruction.

6) Throughout the year both experimental schools evidenced considerable planning by staff for instruction. Each teaching team and the leadership team conducted regular

* Note: During the second year of experimentation this program was dropped because of excessive time spent by staff in evaluation and preparation, and an over-amount of student movement. Thus, the Units decided to terminate the program, place students in homerooms, and seek out new methods of approach to mathematics instruction.

weekly planning meetings. Other numerous sessions were held between teachers in the same grade levels and cross-team staff members. Meeting agendas frequently consisted of planning for and creating of new instructional programs and for incorporating more efficient use of personnel. In the control schools the only indications of regular planning sessions were the total-staff meetings held once or twice each month.

In relation to these six conclusions it is important to discuss two relevant points. First, we are convinced that it is a significant finding that the project schools decided to try some new instructional practices. It is our conclusion that participation in the DS project gave each school good working relationships, sound organizational structures and an increased capacity to try new things. Second, the other participating schools in the project - Meadow Lark and Laurel Hill - are demonstrating similar changes in their instructional programs. The reason these are not discussed in this report is that time has prevented exact documentation of the changes that have occurred. It is intended that this will be the topic of a later report.

In addition to changes that occurred during the initial year of the project, two new major developments in instructional program are now underway at Parker and Spring Creek. Both programs, if successful, could have many implications for the future of curriculum and instruction in the Eugene elementary schools.

The first development is the school-wide "back-to-back" reading program being conducted at Spring Creek. This program was first developed by the Parker 1-2 Unit. The Spring Creek 1-2 Unit decided

to use the program after observing it at Parker and discussing it with the Parker staff. This process of seeking out new ideas and sharing of innovations between the two staffs is itself a valuable outcome of the project.

The key to the program is the use of auxiliary personnel to free teachers for instruction in reading. At Spring Creek, one half of the students in the 1-2 Unit attend a variety of instructional sections offered by auxiliary personnel: the principal, counselor, music specialist and teaching assistants offer instruction in physical education, art, music, reading games, guidance activities, etc. At the same time the other one half of the students are with their respective homeroom teachers for reading instruction. At the end of the forty-minute period, the students exchange activities. (A schedule of the 1-2 Unit program during 1971-72 is on the next page.)

During the first year of the program at Spring Creek, the leadership group -- Principal, Counselor, three Curriculum Associates -- began planning how the 1-2 program might be organized throughout the entire school. The idea was explored with the entire staff. The staff then gave the leadership group approval to continue development. During the summer, the leadership group developed a schedule, various course offerings, and assignments of staff. The plan was presented to the entire staff at the beginning of the school year, gained widespread approval, and was initiated immediately.

Continuous evaluation of the various aspects of the program have been under way since the beginning of the year. The major goal

READING (schedule) 1-2	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
9:00 8:40 - 9:20	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe A1 Reading Rm. (Bev.) / Library (Maxine)	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe B1 Reading Rm. (Bev.) / Library (Maxine)	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe C1 Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe D1 Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe
8:40 - 9:20	P.E. B1 C1 (T.A.) GYM	P.E. A1 D1 (T.A.) GYM	P.E. B1 D1 (T.A.) GYM	P.E. A1 C1 (T.A.) GYM
9:00 8:40 - 9:20	Reading Rm. (Bev) Library (Maxine) D1 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe	Reading Rm. (Bev) Library (Maxine) C1 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe	Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe A1 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe	Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe B1 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe

A1, B1, C1, D1 - GO BACK TO READING CLASSES
A2, B2, C2, D2 - GO TO OTHER ACTIVITIES

9:40 9:20 - 10:00	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe A2 Reading Rm. (Bev) / Library (Maxine)	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe B2 Reading Rm. (Bev) / Library (Maxine)	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe C2 Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe	Music (Janis) - W. Cafe D2 Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe
9:20 - 10:00	P.E. B2 C2 (T.A.) GYM	P.E. A2 D2 (T.A.) GYM	P.E. B2 D2 (T.A.) GYM	P.E. A2 C2 (T.A.) GYM
9:40 9:20 - 10:00	Reading Rm. (Bev) / Library (Maxine) D2 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe	Reading Rm. (Bev) / Library (Maxine) C2 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe	Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe A2 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe	Reading Games (T.A.) E. Cafe B2 Music (Janis) - W. Cafe

is to provide more concentrated, individualized instruction in reading for each student in the school. At present, it is agreed by the staff that that goal is being realized. The main difficulties have been with the activities on the "back side" of the program, the inflexibility in the utilization of staff during those reading blocks, and the role conflicts that have appeared in isolated cases among the "back side" instructors. In early December, 1971, the staff held an entire staff planning session to evaluate the status of the program. Numerous ideas were shared and the leadership group is presently involved in seeking solutions to the concerns and attempting to improve the program.

Many staff members at Spring Creek have expressed that the "back-to-back" reading program would not have been possible without Differentiated Staffing. Specific reasons given for that belief were:

1) The leadership provided by the leadership group was necessary to develop and coordinate such a program throughout the entire school.
2) The availability of the Teaching Assistants and other staff makes it possible to provide that wide variety of experiences for students.
3) The training provided the staff has allowed them to trust the leadership group to create and develop the master plan. It has also created positive working relationships between and within the three Units, so the necessary cooperation to conduct such a program is evident.

By the end of the 1971-72 school year a special report will be forthcoming from Spring Creek on the evaluation of the program. The report will also include recommendations for other schools interested in pursuing similar types of organization for reading instruction.

The second major development in curriculum and instruction is occurring in the Parker 5-6 Unit. Using some ideas from the English free school and math learning center movements, the Unit began planning in January, 1971, to develop and install a set of learning centers for students in the 5-6 grades. Basically, the plan called for transforming each self-contained classroom in the Unit into a specialized learning center. Each center would include a concentration of materials in a particular curriculum area. The materials would be gathered from all teachers in the Unit and located in each center. Each teacher in the Unit was to be responsible for maintaining one of the learning centers; the teacher's major curriculum strengths would help determine which center he would coordinate. Sometimes students can go to the centers as a total class. At other times students can go independently to work in the center of their choice, exploring their high interest areas.

Considerable planning was conducted by the Unit during Winter and Spring, 1971. In the Spring, various moves were made by the Unit to begin the transition into the centers. First, some CASEA staff and one of the DS Coordinators conducted a number of activities with all students in the Unit to gain their ideas about the centers. The results of these student planning sessions had a great bearing on the planning by the Unit staff. Unit members surveyed materials and resources already available in the building

and tried to locate other new materials that could be added to the centers. Unit members also created a program of information to parents about the objectives, intent, and potential for such a program.

During this planning phase the Unit staff often was bogged down for two major reasons. One, the amount of time for planning was limited by the need to continue the regular instructional program. Two, it was difficult for the Unit staff and the DS Coordinators to locate useful information about similar programs elsewhere in the country: the available information about similar programs did not include the steps taken to plan and organize, but only descriptions of what the plans looked like after completion. Despite these difficulties, materials were being relocated and some activities with students were being conducted in the centers by mid-spring.

During the summer the leadership group -- Principal and three Curriculum Associates -- continued planning for the Fall program. In the Fall, school opened with five learning centers in the 5-6 Unit, labeled Discovery, Inquiry, Cultural Arts, Language Arts I, and Language Arts II. Various methods of deploying students into the five centers have been tried during the Fall. At present the Unit staff is working on a master plan to ease some of the confusion created by changing the program. Some additional staffing assistance has been provided by the district to provide more time for the Curriculum Associate to coordinate and plan during the remainder of the year.

Reactions by staff members in the Unit have been similar to those by Spring Creek teachers regarding the reading program. In

essence, staff at Parker are convinced that this type of programming for instruction would have been extremely difficult without the Differentiated Staffing Project involvement. The leadership provided by the Curriculum Associates, the assistance provided by the Teaching Assistants, and the positive working relationships of the Unit members have made a major contribution to the change. A progress report, similar to that on the Spring Creek reading program, is scheduled for Spring, 1972; the report will describe the planning, successes, failures, and potential of this type of programming in the elementary school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe that it has been shown that changing the organizational and staffing patterns of the elementary school does in fact promote major changes in instruction. Taking into consideration the information discussed in this report, and the experiences of the DS Coordinators in attempting to encourage instructional change in the DS project schools, the following recommendations are offered:

1) That when future instructional and curriculum innovations are being considered in the district, organizational and staffing patterns that might facilitate those instructional changes be given equal consideration at the same time. We are convinced that it has been amply demonstrated that instructional innovations stand little chance of success without complementary organizational changes, and vice versa. In practice, this recommendation encourages close collaboration between instructional and

organizational specialists in developing innovative programs and helping school staffs implement them.

2) That the district continue to explore, through careful, planned experimentation, various organizational and staffing patterns that will encourage more effective curriculum and instructional change.

3) That the district engage in a program of in-service education that can assist teachers to cope with the pressures of experimentation and innovation.

4) That the district continue its policy of allowing each school to pursue its particular curriculum and instructional needs, and then provide alternative ways in which each school can organize and staff itself to meet those needs.

A FINAL REMARK

The Eugene School District has continued to seek new avenues for improvement of the instructional program within the district. In recent years the district has been a front runner in the promotion of innovative ideas in curriculum and instruction. As a result of those efforts, there are opportunities for Eugene children to explore and learn within each school.

The emphasis of the Differentiated Staffing Project during the past two and one half years has taken a new perspective for change. The instructional benefits to students observed so far in the DS schools make it clear that the district has still other avenues to explore. Specifically, those avenues are in the areas of school organization, staffing patterns, and new ways to train staff for participation in effective innovation. We have seen the DS Project as a new focus for the district to begin exploring and testing even more alternatives for its students, and more flexibility for its schools. Educators often mention that the job of the school is "to meet the needs of the individual child." Now we are saying there are new methods and opportunities for reaching that goal.

Through increased flexibility of staffing and school organization, the alternatives provided to help students learn become even more extensive than before. We firmly believe that the board, administration, and staff members of this district must continue to pursue the objective that "for schools to be equal, they have to be different." The thrust toward continuous experimentation with staffing, organization, budgeting, teacher

education, curriculum, and instruction is proof of the sincerity of the staff to continue seeking better ways to help students learn. Hopefully, this environment and mode of thinking about improvement will continue in Eugene.